

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At the Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Civic Space, Council Offices, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 4 March 2020 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Provost William Hendrie, Bailie Denis Agnew and Councillors Jim Bollan, Jim Brown, Gail Casey, Karen Conaghan, Ian Dickson, Diane Docherty, Jim Finn, Daniel Lennie, Caroline McAllister, Douglas McAllister, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Iain McLaren, Marie McNair, John Millar, John Mooney, Lawrence O'Neill, Sally Page, Martin Rooney and Brian Walker.

Attending: Joyce White, Chief Executive; Angela Wilson, Strategic Director – Transformation & Public Service Reform; Richard Cairns, Strategic Director – Regeneration, Environment & Growth, Beth Culshaw, Chief Officer, Health & Social Care Partnership, Peter Hessett, Strategic Lead – Regulatory (Legal Officer); Stephen West, Strategic Lead – Resources; Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer; Victoria Rogers, Strategic Lead – People & Technology; Malcolm Bennie, Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture & Communities; Jim McAloon, Strategic Lead – Regeneration; Peter Barry, Strategic Lead – Housing & Employability and Christine McCaffary, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending: Richard Smith, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

Provost William Hendrie in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR – AUDIO STREAMING

Provost Hendrie advised that the meeting was being audio streamed and broadcast live to the internet and would be available for playback.

URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS

The Provost advised that he had received a request from Councillor David McBride for Council to consider an emergency motion calling on the reversal of the Health Board's decision to formally reduce the Out of Hours GP Service at the Vale of Leven Hospital, Alexandria.

The Provost confirmed his agreement, advising that the motion would be considered after the last item of business on the agenda.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jonathan McColl declared an interest in the emergency motion on the Out of Hours GP Service at the Vale of Leven Hospital, being a non-exec member of Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board, and advised that he would remain in the meeting during consideration.

OPEN FORUM

The Council noted that no open forum questions had been submitted by members of the public.

CAPITAL STRATEGY 2020/21 to 2029/30

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources seeking approval of the capital strategy for the period 2020/21 to 2029/30.

The Council agreed to approve the capital strategy as appended to the report.

GENERAL SERVICES BUDGET PREPARATION 2020/21 to 2022/23 – BUDGET UPDATE: COUNCIL TAX AND BUDGET SETTING 2020/21

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources on the above.

Councillor Dickson, seconded by Councillor McColl moved:-

Council thanks officers for their work to deliver the 2019/20 budget with a favourable variance, despite numerous challenges throughout the year.

Council also thanks officers for their assistance to all political groups and individual members throughout this year's budget process and agrees the recommendations at 2.1 and agrees to set a band D council tax at £1,293.54.

Furthermore, Council approves the Administration's budget, appended to this motion (shown as Appendix 1 to these minutes), which balances the budget for 2020/21 and delivers £1m of growth options.

The budget is subject to appropriate consultation and equality impact assessments.

As an amendment Councillor Rooney:-

1. Council notes that the Scottish budget is expected to increase this year by as much as **£1.2 Billion**. At the same time, the Scottish Government is failing to properly fund Scottish Councils. Despite the SNP rhetoric of anti-austerity we will still see deep and continuing cuts to non-core; local government revenue budgets.
2. These cuts are cuts to local community facilities, libraries, sports and leisure services, recycling, our parks and green spaces - the bedrock of our communities.
3. These services are vital to the health and well-being of our constituents and vital to addressing deepening inequalities and poverty.
4. West Dunbartonshire Council will not accept another year of SNP cuts and agrees the only way that this Council's financial situation will improve is through fair funding from the SNP Government.
5. Council also notes the retrospective Loans Fund Review lengthened loan repayment periods, but generated a Loans Fund Reserve which following adjustments totalled **£17.830m** available for use in closing future funding gaps.
6. This approach received unanimous agreement at the January council meeting.
7. The Council notes that in many ways this has been a difficult budget process and thanks all the officers involved for the work they have done throughout the budget setting process.
8. This year the Labour Group of councillors have again opted for a principled approach to the budget and proposes a no cuts budget as we have done in 2018 and 2019. **This means we reject the savings options** at Appendix 5 of the Report.
9. It also means that, **we reject the management adjustments** as outlined in the Appendix to the General Series Budgetary Preparation 2020/21 to 2022/23, Budget Update Report to Council on 29th January 2020 as outlined below:
 - a. 2020/2021 Management Savings £910,227
 - b. 2021/2022 Management Savings £1,220,227
 - c. 2022/2023 Management Savings £1,295,277
10. The Management Adjustments also included the removal of 22.43 Full Time Equivalent Staff.

11. The council therefore agrees the recommendations at 2.1 of the report subject to the following adjustments:
 - a. Serial (g) reject the proposal at 4.6 regarding shared services;
 - b. Serial (k) agree to set the **Band D council Tax** for 2020/2021 at **£1,270.84** (3.00%).
12. In addition, the Council has an earmarked reserve available as part of its budget considerations and at 4.4.5 of the report it states: "***At the beginning of 2019/20 the Change Fund was valued at £2.654m.***" Therefore it is proposed to use **£1.00m** of the Change Fund to help close the 2020/2021 budget gap.
13. The details of the Labour budget proposals are attached (shown as Appendix 2 to these minutes)
14. The Labour Budget had over £500k in reserves and will adjust the budget document to support the SNP proposal for the creation of a new earmarked **£144k** contingency fund over and above the existing support from the council to give continuity of series into 2022 should alternative funding sources not be found. This would reduce the Projected Reserves at 31st March 2021 by £144k.

Following a question from the Legal Officer, Councillor Rooney confirmed that he intended paragraph 14 above to be included as part of Labour's budget proposals, and his amendment was then seconded by Councillor McBride.

On a vote being taken, 9 Members voted for the amendment and 11 vote the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Having heard the Provost, the Council agreed to a short adjournment and that the meeting would reconvene at 4.15 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 4.16 p.m. with all those members listed in the sederunt present, with the exception of Councillor Lennie.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND RENT SETTING 2020/21

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Housing & Employability on the above. A copy of the Administration's document 'More Homes Better Homes 2020-2021' was circulated to those present, and is attached as Appendix 3 to these minutes.

The Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the outcome of the tenant consultation process, detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (2) to note the progress made, per Appendix 2, in the HRA capital programme for 2019/20 as approved by Members at the Council meeting of 14 February 2019;
- (3) the updated five year capital programme of work set out in Appendix 3 to this report inclusive of the Council's new house building programme and the overall resources to fund the programme;
- (4) the revenue budget for 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.;
- (5) the weekly rent increase for 2020/21 at an average £1.52 on a 52 week basis (£1.68 on a 47 week basis), equating to 1.9% to meet the planned revenue HRA budget as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report;
- (6) to increase rents at the Gypsy Travellers site by the 1.9%;
- (7) to maintain the existing level of lock-up rent levels at £5.44 per week on a 52 week basis (£6.02 on a 47 week basis) at the same levels as for 2018/19; and
- (8) the increase in the prudential reserve target for 2019/20 (from £0.850m to £0.883m).

PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2020/21

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources seeking approval of the proposed Prudential Indicators for 2019/20 to 2022/23 and Treasury Management Strategy (including the Investment Strategy) for 2020/21 to 2022/23.

The Council agreed:-

- (1) the following Prudential Indicators and Limits
 - Capital Expenditure and Capital Financing Requirements (as shown in Tables A and B of the report);
 - Forecast and estimates of the ratio of financing costs to Net Revenue Stream (shown in Table D of the report);
- (2) to approve the policy for loans fund advances discussed in Appendix 1 in section 3 of the report;
- (3) to approve the Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 to 2022/23 (including the Investment Strategy) contained within Appendices 2 to 6 of the report;

- (4) the following Treasury Prudential Indicators and Limits discussed in Appendix 2 and set out within Appendix 6 of the report for the period 2020/21 to 2022/23:
 - Operational Boundaries (Table F);
 - Authorised Limits (Table G);
 - Counterparty Limits (Table J); and
 - Treasury Management Limits on Activity (Table L);
- (5) to note the draft Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators for the period 2023/24 to 2029/30 discussed in Appendices 1 and 2 and set out within Appendix 6 of the report;
- (6) to approve the statement by the Section 95 Officer regarding the gross debt level in comparison to the Capital Financing Requirement (Appendix 2 - Point 2.3 of the report); and
- (7) to note the report will be referred to Audit Committee for further scrutiny.

DUMBARTON COMMON GOOD BUDGET UPDATE 2020/21

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources providing an update on the Dumbarton Common Good budget for 2019/20 and seeking approval for a revised budget for 2020/21.

Following discussion, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the probable outturn for 2019/20 as set out in the Appendix to the report;
- (2) to approve the revised 2020/21 budget as set out in the Appendix to the report,
- (3) to note the indicative budgets to 2022/23 as set out in the Appendix to the report;
- (4) to note the projected balances carried forward of £0.455m at 31 March 2020 and £0.329m at 31 March 2021 (based upon the revised draft budget 2020/21); and
- (5) that Dumbarton Town Centre Common Good Fund may be used for both capital and revenue funding applications.

URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS OUT OF HOURS GP SERVICE, VALE OF LEVEN HOSPITAL

Councillor McBride, seconded by Councillor Page moved:-

West Dunbartonshire Council condemns the decision taken by NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde to close the GP Out of Hours service at the Vale of Leven hospital in the evenings and at weekends.

We note that these are the busiest times for people accessing the Out of Hours service and that they will have to travel to the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley instead; understands that the Cabinet Secretary for Health agreed with the suggestion made at a meeting at the Vale of Leven hospital in 2019, that the health board consider an option for local GPs to run the service rather than it being run centrally by the health board.

Council is disappointed that nothing has happened some 10 months later; calls on the health board to work with local GPs and in the meantime instructs the Council Leader to demand an urgent meeting of the health board to reverse the decision to effectively close the Out of Hours service.

As an amendment, Councillor McColl seconded by Bailie Agnew moved:-

West Dunbartonshire Council notes the decision taken by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to formally reflect the GP Out of Hours service that is being provided at the Vale of Leven Hospital, due to a shortage of GPs across the country available to provide these services, in no small part due to UK Government capping of pensions that are impacting on GP recruitment and retention.

Council notes that this is a temporary measure, being taken across the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area, to give residents certainty of access to services while the board takes measures to recruit GPs specifically to carry out these Out of Hours roles.

While these temporary measures are expected to last 4-5 months across most of the board area, it is anticipated that a bespoke local agreement will be reached much sooner for full Out of Hours services to be provided at the Vale of Leven Hospital, out with the centrally provided services.

We note that while these temporary measures are in place, should someone need to see a GP when the service is unavailable, transport to and from an open service will be provided for those who need it. If a person's need is urgent, a GP will attend them at their home.

While Council is concerned about the situation and the lack of GPs available to work Out of Hours, Council agrees that it is important that people know when and where they can access services; the on-going hiatus and ad-hoc provision was not sustainable.

It is vital that services that the Vale of Leven Hospital and across the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area are restored, and we recognise that the Health Board are doing everything they can to find and recruit GPs.

Residents should continue to call NHS 24 on 111 to access services as normal.

Council asks the Council Leader to continue to work constructively with the Health Board to ensure that the needs of our constituents are met.

At the request of Councillor O'Neill, the Council proceeded by way of a roll-call vote. On a vote being taken 11 members voted for the amendment, namely Provost Hendrie, Bailie Agnew and Councillors Brown, Dickson, Conaghan, Docherty, Finn, Caroline McAllister, McColl, McLaren and McNair, 10 members voted for the motion, namely Councillors Bollan, Casey, Douglas McAllister, McBride, Millar, Mooney, O'Neill, Page, Rooney and Walker. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

The meeting closed at 5.05 p.m.